City of Falls Church

Design Guidelines

December 2001

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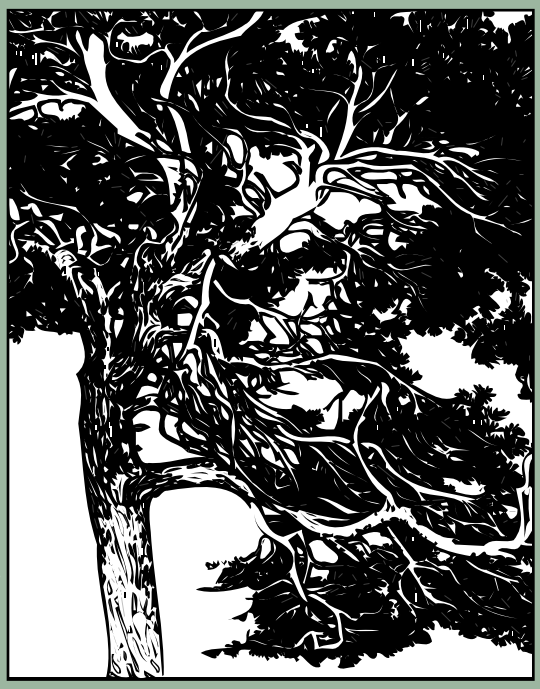

The City of Falls Church has witnessed three centuries of change since its founding in 1699. At the same time, the spirit of community has been a constant thread throughout the village's history. The leaders and residents of Falls Church care passionately about their historic urban village, including its beauty and its setting. These design guidelines were created to help them improve the appearance of Falls Church as they pass on this unique community to the next generation.

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Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings

Building designs, methods and materials for historic structures are frequently different from modern construction. An older building has a distinctive patina that comes from its age. All of these characteristics require that specialized rehabilitation techniques be used on historic structures. This chapter provides guidance in that regard.

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Note: These guidelines are intended to complement and guide the rehabilitation efforts for properties zoned HCC. The guidelines are not intended to supersede the requirements of the HCC District or the role of the HARB. These guidelines may also help guide property owners whose property is not zoned HCC, but are seeking to rehabilitate properties in a historically accurate manner.

A Foundation

1. Keep crawl space vents open so that air flows freely.
2. Retain any decorative vents that are original to the building.
3. Ensure that land is graded so that water flows away from the foundation and if necessary install drains around the foundation.
4. Remove any vegetation that may cause structural disturbances at the foundation.
5. Take steps as outlined in the masonry section of this guideline, where masonry has deteriorated.
6. Clean and repair gutters to avoid water damage to the foundation.

B Entrances, Porches and Doors

1. Inspect porches and entrances for signs of rust, peeling paint, wood deterioration, open joints around frames, deteriorating putty and inadequate caulking. Correct any of these conditions.
2. Repair damaged elements and match the detail of the existing original fabric. Reuse hardware and locks that are original or important to the historical evolution of the building.
3. Do not enclose porches on primary elevations and avoid enclosing porches on secondary elevations in a manner that radically changes its historic appearance.
4. When installing storm or screen doors ensure that they relate to the character of the existing door. Avoid using aluminum-colored storm doors.
5. Replace an entire porch only if it is too deteriorated to repair or is completely missing. The new porch should match the original as closely as possible in materials, size and detail.
6. Avoid substituting the original doors with stock size doors that do not fit the opening properly or do not blend with the style of the house.
7. Avoid removing or radically changing entrances and porches important in defining the building's overall historic character. If altering the porch and/or entrance is unavoidable, ensure that the new treatment matches or blends with the original style or character of the house.

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C Windows

1. Retain original windows if possible. Ensure that all hardware is in good operating condition. Ensure that caulk and glazing putty are intact and that water drains off the sills.
2. Repair original windows by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing.
3. Uncover and repair covered-up windows and reinstall windows with their original dimensions where they have been blocked in. If the window is no longer needed, the glass should be retained and the backside frosted, screened, or shuttered so that it appears from the outside to be in use.

4. Replace windows only when they are missing or beyond repair. Reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or old photographs.
5. Do not use materials or finishes that radically change the sash, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing or the appearance of the frame.
6. Use true divided lights to replace similar examples and do not use false muntins in the replacement.
7. Do not change the number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows on primary elevations by cutting new openings, blocking in windows or installing replacement sash that does not fit the window opening.
8. Improve thermal efficiency with weather stripping, storm windows (preferably interior), caulking, interior shades and if appropriate for the building, blinds and awnings.
9. Use shutters only on windows that show evidence of their use in the past. They should be wood (rather than metal or vinyl) and should be mounted on hinges. The size of the shutters should result in their covering the window opening when closed. Avoid shutters on composite or bay windows.

D Cornices, Parapets and Eaves

1. Repair rather than replace the cornice. Do not remove elements such as brackets or blocks that are part of the original composition without replacing them with new ones of a like design.
2. Match materials, decorative details and profiles of the existing original cornice design when making repairs.
3. Do not wrap or cover cornice or eaves with vinyl or aluminum; these substitute materials may cover up original architectural details and also may hide underlying moisture problems.
4. Do not replace an original cornice with a new one that conveys a different period, style or theme from that of the building.
5. If the cornice is missing, the replacement should be based on physical evidence, or barring that, be compatible with the original building.

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E Roof

1. Retain elements such as chimneys, skylights and light wells that contribute to the style and character of the building.
2. Match original materials as closely as possible when replacing a roof. Evaluate roof replacement projects in light of the prominence and visibility of the roof, the architectural distinctiveness of the roof and the relative architectural and historic significance of the building.
3. Maintain critical flashing around joints and ensure proper functioning of the gutter system.
4. Ventilate the attic space to prevent condensation.
5. Place solar collectors and antennae on non-character defining roofs or roofs of non-historic adjacent buildings.
6. Do not add new elements such as vents, skylights or additional stories that would be visible on the primary elevations of the building.

F Masonry

1. Retain historic masonry features that are important in defining the overall character of the building.
2. Repair damaged masonry features by patching, piecing in or consolidating to match original instead of replacing an entire masonry feature if possible. The size, texture, color and pattern of masonry units, as well as mortar joint size and tooling should be respected.
3. Repair cracks in masonry as they allow moisture penetration and consequently, deterioration. Ensure that the cracks do not indicate structural settling or deterioration.
4. Remove deteriorated mortar and masonry in a way that does not damage the masonry. Duplicate mortar in strength, composition, color and texture.
5. Repair stucco or plastering by removing loose material and patching with a new material that is similar in composition, color and texture.
6. Patch stone in small areas with a cement-like material which, like mortar, should be weaker than the masonry being repaired and should be mixed accordingly. This type of work should be done by skilled craftsmen.
7. Repair broken stone or carved details with epoxies. Application of such materials should be undertaken by skilled craftsmen.
8. Discourage the use of waterproof, water-repellent or non-historic coatings on masonry. They often aggravate rather than solve moisture problems.
9. Never sandblast any masonry. Avoid high-pressure washes of masonry.
10. Avoid painting unpainted masonry.

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G Wood

1. Retain wood features that define the overall character of the building. Repair rotted sections with new wood, epoxy consolidate or fillers.
2. Replace wood elements only when they are rotted beyond repair. Match the original in material and design or use substitute materials that convey the same appearance. Base the design of reconstructed elements on pictorial or physical evidence from the actual building rather than from similar buildings in the area.
3. Keep wood painted. Avoid using unpainted pressure-treated wood except for structural members that will be near the ground and outdoor floor decking.

Masonry Maintenance

Most of the major masonry problems can be avoided through monitoring and prevention. Prevent water from causing deterioration by ensuring proper drainage, removing vegetation too close to the building, repairing leaking roof and gutter systems, securing loose flashing around chimneys and caulking joints between masonry and wood. Repair cracks and unsound mortar with mortar and masonry that matches the historic material.

Masonry Tip

Clean masonry only when necessary to remove heavy paint buildup, halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling. Use chemical paint and dirt removers formulated for masonry. Use a low-pressure wash, equivalent to the pressure in a garden hose, to remove chemicals and clean the building.

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H Metals

1. When cleaning metals is necessary, use the gentlest means possible. Do not sandblast copper, lead or tin.
2. Do not remove the patina of metals such as bronze or copper since it provides a protective coating and is a historically significant finish.
3. Repair or replace metals as necessary, using identical or compatible materials. Some metals are incompatible and should not be placed together without a separation material such as nonporous, neoprene gaskets or butyl rubber caulking.

I Synthetic Siding

1. Avoid the use of synthetic siding on historic homes. In addition to changing the appearance of a historic building, synthetic siding can make maintenance more difficult because it covers up potential problems that can become more serious. Artificial siding, once it dents or fades, needs painting just like wood.
2. Remove synthetic siding and restore original building material, if possible.

J Paint

1. Remove loose and peeling paint down to the next sound layer, using the gentlest means possible: hand scraping and sanding (wood and masonry) and wire brushes (metal). A heat gun can be used on wood for built-up paint. Do not use open flames or torches to remove paint.
2. Do not paint masonry that is unpainted.

Painting Tips

- Ensure that all surfaces are free of dirt, grease and grime before painting.
- Prime surfaces if bare wood is exposed or if changing types of paints, such as from oil-based to latex.
- Do not apply latex paint directly over oil-based paint as it will not bond properly.
- Use a high-quality paint and follow manufacturer's specifications for preparation and application.

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K Additions

1. Function

Attempt to accommodate needed functions within the existing structure without building an addition.

2. Location

a. Attempt to locate the addition on the rear or side elevations or in a manner that makes them visually secondary to the primary elevation of the historic house.

b. If the addition is located on a primary elevation facing the street or if a rear or side addition faces a street, parking area or an important pedestrian route, the visible elevation of the addition should be treated under the new construction guidelines.

3. Attachment to Existing Building

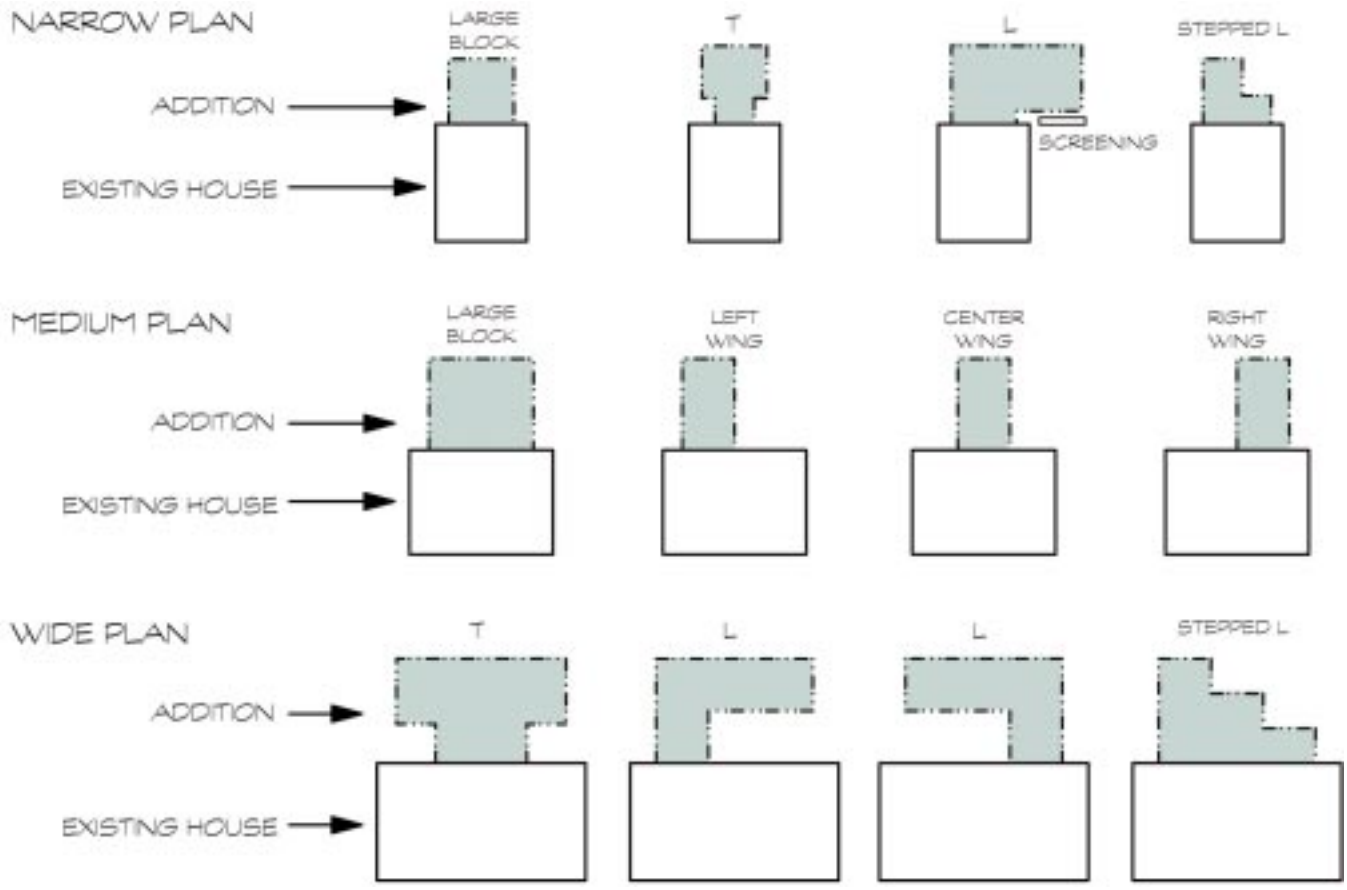
Whenever possible, a new addition to or the alteration of an existing building should be done in such a manner that, if the change were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building would be unimpaired. Therefore, the new design should not use the same wall plane, roofline or cornice line of the existing structure.

4. Design and Replication of Style

a. Limit the size of the addition so that it does not visually overpower the existing building.

b. A new addition generally should not always be an exact copy of the design of the historic building. If the new addition appears to be a part of the existing building, the integrity of the original historic design can be compromised and the viewer is confused over what is historic and what is new. The design of an addition can be compatible with and respectful of the existing building without mimicking the original design.

c. New additions should not destroy historic materials that characterize the property.



This drawing shows types and locations of a variety of additions depending on the size and proportions of the existing dwelling.

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L Removing Historic Buildings

Historic buildings are irreplaceable community assets and once they are gone, they are gone forever. With each succeeding demolition or removal, the integrity of Falls Church's heritage is further eroded. The new building or the parking lot that often replaces the removed historic building is seldom an attribute to the historic character of the community. Therefore, the moving or demolition of any significant historic building should be considered very carefully before any approval is given.

1. Criteria for Moving the Building
   a. Move building only after all alternatives to retention have been examined, including a professional feasibility study.
   b. Contact the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for assistance prior to moving the building if there is a desire to remain listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
   c. Photograph the building and the site thoroughly and measure the building if the move will require substantial reconstruction.
   d. Thoroughly assess the building's structural condition in order to minimize any damage that might occur during the move.
   e. Select a contractor who has experience in moving buildings and check references with other building owners who have used this contractor.
   f. Secure the building from vandalism and potential weather damage before and after its move.
   g. Improve the empty lot in a manner consistent with other open space in the neighborhood if the site is to remain vacant for any length of time.

2. Criteria for Demolishing the Building
   a. Demolish a historic building only after all preferable alternatives have been exhausted.
   b. Document the building thoroughly through photographs and measured drawings according to Historic American Building Survey standards.
   c. Improve the empty lot in a manner consistent with other open space in the neighborhood if the site is to remain vacant for any length of time.

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Criteria for Evaluating Moving Proposals

1. Would the proposed relocation have a detrimental effect on structural soundness of the building or structure?
2. Would the proposed relocation have a detrimental effect on the historical aspects of other historic structures in the HCC District?
3. Would relocation prevent demolition of the building?
4. Would relocation provide new surroundings that would be harmonious with or incongruous to the historical and architectural aspects of the structure of building?
5. Would relocation of the building help preserve and protect a historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
6. Consider the economic hardship, if any, to the applicant.

Criteria for Evaluating Demolition Proposals

1. Is the building of such architectural or historical interest that razing it would be detrimental to the public interest?
2. Is the design, texture and material of the building so old or unusual that it could not be reproduced or reconstructed in a financially reasonable manner?
3. Is the building structurally sound or can it be made sound at reasonable cost?
4. If maintained or rehabilitated and used under existing zoning, can the building be expected to yield a reasonable return or beneficial use at reasonable cost to its owner?
5. Could the building be saved from razing by moving it to another site, thus making its present site available for redevelopment in accordance with existing zoning?

Appendices

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ADDITION. A new part such as a wing, ell or porch added to an existing building or structure.

ALTERATION. A visible change to the exterior of a building or structure.

BAY. A part of a structure defined by vertical divisions such as adjacent columns or piers.

BAY WINDOW. Fenestration projecting from an exterior wall surface and often forming a recess in the interior space.

BELT COURSE. A flat horizontal wall member that slightly projects and makes a division in the wall plane.

BERM. A bank of earth covered with some type of ground cover or plantings that is usually is used as a visual screen and sound barrier.

BROKEN PEDIMENT. A pediment where the sloping sides do not meet at the apex but instead return, creating an opening that sometimes contains an ornamental vase or similar form on a pedestal.

BULKHEAD. That part of a storefront facade on which the display window rests.

CANOPY. A freestanding or attached part of a building that consists of a roof with supporting members and serves as a shelter.

CAST STONE. A masonry unit molded in a cast to appear as a piece of stone.

COBRA-HEAD LIGHT FIXTURE. A commonly used street light fixture in which the luminaire is suspended from a simple, curved metal arm.

COLUMN. A vertical support, usually supporting a member above.

CORNICE. A horizontal molded projection which crowns or finishes the wall of a building.

FACADE. The front face or elevation of a building.

FLASHING. Pieces of metal used for waterproofing roof joints.

GABLE ROOF. A pitched roof in the shape of a triangle.

GLAZING. Fitting glass into windows and doors.

HIPPED ROOF. A roof with slopes on all four sides. They are more common on older houses than on those built after 1940.

INFILL BUILDING. A new structure built in a block or row of existing buildings.

Glossary

LIGHT. A section of a window; the glass or pane.

LINTEL. A horizontal beam over an opening carrying the weight of the wall.

MANSARD ROOF. A roof with a slope in two planes in which the lower plane is steeper.

MASONRY. That aspect of construction that deals with laying up of brick, stone and tile, as well as concrete and plastering.

MASSING. The arrangements and spatial relationships of the major parts of a building.

MONOLITHIC. A massive and undifferentiated building design.

MUNTIN. A glazing bar that separates panes of glass.

PARAPET. A low wall that rises above a roof line, terrace or porch and may be decorated.

PATINA. The appearance of a material's surface that has aged and weathered. It often refers to the green film that forms on copper and bronze.

PIER. An upright structure of masonry serving as a principal support.

PORTICO. An entrance porch often supported by columns and sometimes topped by a pedimented roof; can be open or partially enclosed.

PRESERVATION. The sustaining of the existing form, integrity and material of a building or structure and the existing form and vegetation of a site.

REHABILITATION. Returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions or features that are significant to its historical, architectural and cultural values.

REMODEL. To alter a structure in a way that may or may not be sensitive to the preservation of its significant architectural forms and features.

RESTORATION. Accurately recovering the form and details of a property and its setting as it appeared at a particular period of time, by removing later work and/or replacing missing earlier work.

REPOINT. To remove old mortar from courses of masonry and replace it with new mortar.

SASH. The movable part of a window holding the glass.

SCALE. The harmonious relationship of parts of a building to one another and to the human figure.

SETBACK. The distance between a building and the front of the property line.

SHED ROOF. A roof with only one sloping plane.

SIGN BAND. The area that is incorporated within or directly under the cornice of a storefront and that contains the sign of the business in the building.

STREETSCAPE. A term used to refer to the public areas of a community along a street and the elements that make up that space such as sidewalks, lights, site furniture, plantings, signs, parks, etc.

SUB-AREA. A term used throughout these guidelines to identify several parts of Falls Church where the goal is to create a visually distinctive district. These sub-areas are described further on page 24 and illustrated on the map on pages 22 and 23.

SYNTHETIC SIDING. Any siding made of vinyl, cement, aluminum or other metallic material to resemble a variety of authentic wood siding types.

TRANSOM. In commercial buildings, the area of windows in the storefront above the display windows and above the door.

VERNACULAR. Indigenous architecture that generally is not designed by an architect and may be characteristic of a particular area. Many simple functional buildings are considered vernacular because they do not exhibit enough characteristics to relate to a particular architectural style.

WALL PLANE. The flat vertical surface of a wall in relation to other such elements.

WATER TABLE. A projecting course of masonry near a foundation that is beveled for weathering.

Appendices

Resources

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AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS. Provides information about the scope of landscape architecture and links to publications and related sites. http://www.asla.org

CYBURBIA. Cyburbia contains a comprehensive directory of Internet resources relevant to planning, architecture, urbanism and other topics related to the built environment. http://www.arch.buffalo.edu/pairc

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: LINKS TO THE PAST. A comprehensive listing of links relating to Historic Preservation. Subjects include archaeology, educational materials, architecture, landscapes and many more preservation related categories. http://www.cr.nps.gov

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by Congress in 1949, is a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting historic resources. It fights to save historic buildings and the neighborhoods and landscapes they anchor through education and advocacy.
http://www.nationaltrust.org/main/abouttrust/mission.htm

NTHP'S NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER. Provides information and resources on the Main Street program of downtown revitalization through historic preservation and economic development. http://www.mainst.org

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: PRESERVATION BRIEFS. Preservation Briefs assist owners and developers of historic buildings in recognizing and resolving common preservation and repair problems prior to work. http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm

OLD HOUSE JOURNAL ONLINE. The OHJ online offers publications, forums, historic house plans, a restoration directory and a database of professionals in the preservation field. http://www.oldhousejournal.com

PRESERVATION WEB. Preservation Web is an online guide to thousands of specialized services and products you need to successfully restore, rehabilitate and preserve America's historic buildings. http://www.preservationweb.com

Internet Resources

TRADITIONAL BUILDING MAGAZINE ONLINE. This web-site is the gateway to more than 400 leading suppliers of traditionally styled products and related services. These products are appropriate for restoration and renovation of older structures — as well as traditionally styled new buildings. http://www.traditional-building.com

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources maintains information on the Commonwealth's historic architecture and archaeological sites. It is the mission of the Department to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship of Virginia's significant historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources.
http://www.dhr.state.va.us

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is dedicated to improving the quality of communities in Virginia.
http://www.dhcd.state.va.us

VIRGINIA'S MAIN STREET PROGRAM. Since 1985, Virginia Main Street has been helping localities revitalize the economic vitality of downtown commercial districts using the National Main Street Center's successful Main Street Approach(tm) -
http://www.dhcd.state.va.us/CD/crd/msp/mspindex.htm

VIRGINIA SOCIETY AIA. The VSAIA is the state component of the American Institute of Architects. Since 1914, VSAIA has represented the professional interests of architects in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
http://www.aiava.org